

Dear Co-Chair Daugherty-Abrams, Co-Chair Steinberg, Vice Chair Anwar, Vice Chair Kushner, Vice Chair Gilchrest, Ranking Member Hwang, Ranking Member Somers, Ranking Member Petit, and other distinguished members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Kristopher Knapp of Stonington Connecticut

RE: H.B. No. 5397 AN ACT DECLARING GUN VIOLENCE A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS AND ESTABLISHING THE OFFICE OF GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND ADVISORY COUNCIL ON GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION.

S.B. No. 477 AN ACT CONCERNING THE PUBLIC HEALTH OF RESIDENTS OF THE STATE.

We can all agree that the estimated 36,000 lives lost a year from “gun violence” are tragic and deserve attention. You would therefore think that support for HB 5397 and SB 477 would be easy. However, I take pause, and you should too.

I MIGHT support these bills IF the proposed Office of Gun Violence Prevention planned to:

- include data and offered strategies to combat ALL types of violence, not just “gun violence”.
  - include programs like Walk the Talk America or Hold My Guns, which offer solutions to reduce suicide by firearms. As you know, 66% of firearm-related deaths are from suicide. Why are you not also directing resources where it will save the most lives?
  - include data on defensive gun uses. Guns confer benefit as well as risk.
  - include firearm subject matter experts like firearm instructors and trainers so that they could lend their extensive experience with firearms, firearm safety and responsible firearm ownership to the dialogue.
- As usual, the persons who seek to make laws that will affect legal gun owners know NOTHING about guns!!!!

- acknowledge publicly that it was the Connecticut Citizens Defense League as well as pro-gun state legislators that advocated for an addition to Public Act 19-5, otherwise known as “Ethan’s Law”, that called for the state Board of Education to develop a Firearm Safety Guide for K-12 curriculum. Include them as partners.

- include data on the number and effect of nolle charges in Connecticut. I’ve made this point during my opposition to SB 16. I can’t help but notice that the overriding theme of these bills seems to focus on “gun violence” in urban centers and communities of color. These are the same communities where repeat offenders are let loose time and time again. For that reason, I am buoyed by the fact that the largest increase in new pistol permits is in black females (66%). Self-defense is a human right. Otherwise, I can only think that the usual suspects will use the proposed offices, advisory councils, commissions, and 7.5 million dollars in public funds to push their agenda against legal gun owners. I hope not. I truly hope that these bills will do good for the state of Connecticut, hold criminals accountable, combat illegal firearm trafficking and theft, and address the socioeconomic contributors to all types of violence. However, I remain skeptical. For this reason, I regret that I must OPPOSE H.B. 5397 and S.B. 477.

Until we start addressing the root causes of violence there will always be violent crime. And all any new gun laws do is restrict lawful gun owners. The right to bear arms and defend yourself is a constitutional right enshrined in the constitution. I as a gun owner am tired of being vilified everytime a criminal does something. And I’m tired of myself and my community being treated like a problem everytime something bad happens. Until you can guarantee there will be no bias against gun owners ever I whole heartedly oppose these Bill’s and will whole heartedly oppose any and all future similar bills like these.

Thank you,

Kristopher Knapp